

Chinese Ambassador to the UK summoned to the FCDO

News story

The FCDO Permanent Under-Secretary has summoned the Chinese Ambassador to the UK to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office



A Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office spokesperson said:

Today the Chinese Ambassador was summoned to the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. The Permanent Under-Secretary set out that China's imposition of new rules to disqualify elected legislators in Hong Kong was a breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration. He called on China to uphold its international obligations.

Beijing's latest actions are an assault on Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and rights and freedoms guaranteed under the Joint Declaration.

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Coronavirus: £100m Zoo Animals Fund application deadline extended



The deadline for applications for the £100m Zoo Animals Fund, which opened for [applications on 3 August 2020](#), has been extended until 26 February 2021.

The fund provides funding for zoos and aquariums which need additional support in caring for their animals following a drop in income caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Zoos and aquariums which are facing severe financial difficulties as a result of the pandemic can apply for government grants of up to £730,000 to pay for animal welfare related costs and essential maintenance.

Animal Welfare Minister Lord Goldsmith said:

I recognise that this has been an extremely tough time for the sector, and I would like to extend my thanks to all of those who have worked so hard in recent months to maintain animal welfare. We remain committed to ensuring the sector can deliver the best possible care for its animals.

The fund also offers grants to support rehoming costs in the event that zoos need to downsize or potentially close, and continues to be open to zoos and aquariums which have already received support through the [£14 million Zoo Support Fund](#).

In addition, there are already a number of support schemes available to zoos, including the Job Retention Scheme, VAT deferral, Business Rates Relief, the Business Interruption Loan schemes, the option to reclaim the costs of Statutory Sick Pay and grant funding of up to £25,000 available through the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund.

The Zoo Animals Fund will remain [open for applications](#) until 26 February 2021 and will run until the end of March 2021. Zoos and aquariums can apply for the fund at any time ahead of this deadline.

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Application deadline extended to 26 February 2021

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Companies House wins at the inaugural Wales STEM Awards

Cardiff-based Companies House was among 42 innovative companies to be named finalists in this year's highly anticipated awards, which celebrated those making a difference to, and championing, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths (STEM) in Wales.

Companies House was named winner in the Innovation in Mathematics category, which aims to recognise a company that has created and developed innovative mathematical products and processes that have improved the performance of the organisation.

Head judge Louise Bright, founder of the Wales Women in STEM network, said:

We would like to offer a huge congratulations all of the winners of the very first Wales STEM Awards.

The calibre of those nominated for the awards was second to none and we were overwhelmed by the number of entries we received.

We would also like to congratulate all of those who were shortlisted, we really feel that all of the finalists represent some of the most progressive organisations and individuals at the forefront of STEM innovation in Wales.

We are very much looking forward to the future of the Wales STEM Awards and the future of the STEM sector in Wales.

Co-Founder Liz Brookes of Grapevine Event Management said:

While it was a shame that we weren't able to celebrate the awards in person, we are extremely happy that we were able to celebrate virtually. I would like to offer a huge congratulations to all of the winners and to all of those shortlisted. Your work is incredibly important, and we thank you for your contributions to STEM in Wales.

When we launched the awards at the tail end of 2019, we could never

have predicted that a global pandemic would scupper our event plans, while at the same time, shine a global spotlight on the importance of STEM in our lives.

In the last year, science has allowed researchers to study the virus, technology has allowed us to work from home effectively, engineering has enabled us to build ventilators and convert buildings into hospitals, and mathematical modelling has helped the government and health professionals look at the spread and potential impact of the virus.

Not only have STEM skills been vital in the fight against the virus, but they will continue to be essential as we recover from the crisis and we're proud to be shining a spotlight on our innovators in Wales.

The [Wales STEM Awards](#) were launched last year in a bid to recognise the innovative STEM work being undertaken in Wales, address the diversity gap and skills shortage, and inspire and raise the aspirations of the next generation.

Co-founded by communications agency jamjar and Grapevine Event Management, the inaugural awards were supported by headline sponsors GS Verde Group, which comprises law firm Greenaway Scott, corporate finance boutique Verde Corporate Finance, and patent attorney firm Alchemie IP.

Other sponsors included Box UK, Business News Wales, Cardiff Metropolitan University, CPS Group, Compound Semiconductor Applications Catapult, Development Bank of Wales, Haus, Rolls-Royce, and Valero Energy.

The nominated charity partner for the awards was [Cancer Research Wales](#), which is dedicated to developing life-changing treatments, diagnostic techniques, and research for people with cancer.

Puppy lovers should paws for thought to avoid being 'Petfished' this Christmas, warns Chief Veterinary Officer

- Chief Veterinary Officer urges the public to think twice before buying a new pet this Christmas and to thoroughly research sellers
- 400% surge in searches for 'buy a puppy' expected from mid- November
- Public urged to look at the seller's profile and search their name

online

Those looking to bring a new puppy or kitten home this Christmas are being urged to research the person behind the pet to avoid being lured in by deceitful sellers.

The price of puppies has more than doubled during lockdown according to the online marketplace Pets4Homes. This has led to the UK's Chief Vet raising concerns about the risk posed by deceitful low-welfare sellers who breed and keep animals in poor conditions to take advantage of this spike in prices.

With the new national restrictions in place until 2 December, prospective pet owners are being urged to be alert to the risks involved while they are not permitted to visit the animal in person in its home environment, and to think about additional checks they can undertake to ensure the seller is legitimate.

Animals bred in low-welfare conditions can often be separated from their mother too early in their development and this can lead to severe health and behavioural problems resulting in high vet bills.

Christmas has been a peak period for puppy sales for decades and research has shown this trend continuing. Last year the number of tweets mentioning buying puppies jumped by 435% in the lead up to Christmas. Online retailer Preloved, reported that the majority of what it considers to be 'high volume' days for pet listings – when sellers post the most adverts for cats, kittens, dogs and puppies – occurred between late November and mid-December last year.

Chief Veterinary Officer Christine Middlemiss said:

After a difficult year and with many of us spending more time at home, many people may be considering getting a new puppy or kitten.

However, the lead up to Christmas is a prominent time for unscrupulous sellers to take advantage of those looking to buy a new pet. That is why we are advising people to remain vigilant and to always thoroughly research sellers before getting in touch.

Potential buyers should also note that Christmas might not be the best time to get a pet as it can be noisy and chaotic, which isn't the best environment to settle in a new animal.

RSPCA chief executive Chris Sherwood said:

While the idea of a new pet joining your family around the tree may be a wonderful festive scene, the truth behind your Christmas puppy could be much darker.

Dogs used in the underground puppy trade lead miserable lives in horrific conditions and their puppies often have lifelong health

and behavioural problems due to their poor start.

We're supporting the Petfished campaign to urge prospective buyers to always research the seller first. It is always much better to wait for the right dog than to rush into buying – and unwittingly support cruelty. If concerned, walk away from the seller and contact the RSPCA on 0300 1234 999.

The government-led Petfished campaign provides advice on how to research a seller and what warning signs to look out for, such as:

- Look at the seller's profile and search their name online. If they are advertising many litters from different breeds, then this is a red flag.
- Check contact details. Copy and paste the phone number into a search engine. If the number is being used on lots of different adverts, sites and dates then this is likely a deceitful seller.
- Check the animal's age. Puppies and kittens should never be sold if they are under 8 weeks old.
- Check what medical treatment the animal has had.

More information on what to do before contacting a seller and what to ask when you do get in touch can be found at getyourpetsafely.gov.uk or by searching 'Get your pet safely'.

Under Lucy's Law, since April 2020 commercial third-party puppy and kitten sales have been banned in England as part of a crackdown on puppy farms and untrustworthy sellers. This means that anyone wanting to get a new puppy or kitten in England must buy direct from a breeder, or consider adopting from a rescue centre instead. Licensed dog breeders are required to show puppies interacting with their mothers in their place of birth.

A new video 'The 12 Days of Petfished' has also been released today, reworking the lyrics of the Christmas classic to tell a story of a young puppy whose owners unwittingly purchase him from a deceitful seller and highlights the potential consequences for others who may fall into this trap. You can view the video [here](#).

Further information

- Petfished is a public information campaign run by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in England. It is supported by a range of animal welfare charities, veterinary organisations and commercial partners.
- Commercial partners supporting the campaign include Preloved, Pets4Homes, BorrowMyDoggy, Pet Food Manufacturers' Association, UKPets and Fetch (Ocado)
- Commercial third-party sales of puppies and kittens were banned in

England from 6 April 2020. Known as [Lucy's Law](#), the law means anyone looking to buy or adopt a puppy or kitten must deal directly with the breeder or with one of the nation's reputable rehoming centres.

Made in Cumbria: the nuclear storage solution set to 'rack-up' the savings

And the innovation could save the UK £2 billion in nuclear decommissioning costs.

Workington's West Cumberland Engineering Ltd, Bendalls Engineering Ltd, of Carlisle, and TEAM Industrial Services, which has bases in Kendal and Carlisle, have delivered the first 'Hybrid 1 63 Can Rack' to Sellafield.

At a stroke, it triples the number of fuel cans that can be held in one underwater storage container.

The 63 can rack, Hybrid 1 design can store 63 fuel cans in one rack.

It's an important breakthrough because space is limited in the UK's only storage pond for Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor (AGR) fuel, at Sellafield's Thorp plant.

It will also help reduce the time it takes to remove fuel from AGR reactors, saving potentially £2 billion on decommissioning costs.

There are currently 7 AGR power stations in the UK, all operated by EDF Energy.

The project has also had input from Sellafield Ltd, EDF Energy, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, and Direct Rail Services.

Andrew Pringle, AGR operating Programme Manager for Sellafield Ltd, said:

It has been a great example of collaboration.

As the AGR stations are coming to the end of their operational lives, we have to look at how we store the fuel.

The current storage compartments can hold up to 20 fuel cans. We knew this wouldn't be enough. So for a number of years, we've been working to design a solution.

The answer is the 63 can rack, Hybrid 1 design. As the name

suggests, it can store 63 fuel cans in one rack.

The first rack has been placed in the Thorp Receipt and Storage Pond. We have a further 15 to follow and then the Hybrid 2 Rack, which is an enhanced design to optimise manufacturing, will be used to store fuel cans.

This will ensure we can support ongoing AGR receipts and enable accelerated bulk defueling of the AGR reactors from 8 years to 3.5 years. That's good news for the tax payer as it will potentially save around £2 billion in decommissioning costs.

The Cumbrian collaboration will manufacture 8 of the Hybrid 1 design racks in total. A further 8 are being produced by Grahams Engineering Ltd, of Lancashire.

A contract opportunity to manufacture the Hybrid 2 design racks has been published on Sellafield Ltd's CTM system (ref 12613.) Contract award is expected in August 2021.